

Prime Minister Norov Altankhuyag was ousted by members of his own ruling coalition in November 2014. He was replaced two weeks later by Chimed Saikhanbileg.

Mongolia continued to experience economic challenges in 2014 despite the continuation of moderate growth based on mineral wealth. Corruption, declining foreign investment, and public officials' involvement with business interests remained key issues throughout the year.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

## **Political Rights: 36 / 40 [Key]**

### **A. Electoral Process: 11 / 12**

Under the 1992 constitution, the president and the 76-member parliament (the State Great Khural) are both directly elected for four-year terms. The prime minister, who holds most executive power, is nominated by the party or coalition with the most seats in the parliament and approved by the parliament with the agreement of the president. The president is head of state and of the armed forces, and can veto legislation, subject to a two-thirds parliamentary override.

Parliamentary balloting in the past has been both by multimember and single-member districts. In 2012, 48 of parliament's 76 seats were awarded through majoritarian voting in single-member districts, while the remaining 28 were allocated through a proportional system according to parties' share of the national vote. The Democratic Party (DP) won 33 seats, the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) captured 25, and the Justice Coalition—comprising the revived Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the Mongolian National Democratic Party (MNDP)—took 11, with 3 seats going to independents and 2 to the Civil Will–Green Party. Altankhuyag of the DP became prime minister, leading a coalition cabinet that consisted of the DP, the Justice Coalition, and the Civil Will–Green Party.

Altankhuyag was replaced as prime minister by Saikhanbileg in November 2014 after an internal revolt from DP members amid Mongolia's continuing economic downturn. Saikhanbileg now leads a coalition of 73 out of 76 members of parliament; only the three independent members remain outside.

In the 2013 presidential election, DP-backed Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj won a second term, garnering just over 50 percent of the votes in the first round against two other candidates. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) monitored the 2013 presidential election, declaring it free and open despite administrative challenges with election officials and some criticism of politicization in news coverage.

In both 2012 and 2013, the General Election Commission introduced new practices, such as the release of voting statistics by time of day and age group, and free mobile-phone credits as a reward for voting.

### **B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 16 / 16**

A vibrant multiparty system exists in Mongolia. The MPRP, which had ruled the country since the early

20th century, legalized opposition parties in 1990, and competitive elections have led to several peaceful transfers of power. In 2010, the MPRP rebranded itself as the MPP, but a faction led by former president Nambaryn Enkhbayar broke off the following year and formed a new MPRP.

While the DP and the MPP command a large share of votes and dominate the parliament, smaller parties continue to be represented and remain viable. Political parties are largely built around patronage networks rather than political ideologies. Representatives of large business groups play an important role in funding and directing the large parties. In 2014, the parliament discussed having some elected members serve as ministers. Some argued that this practice would undermine parliamentary rights by giving the cabinet too much power. Contention over the issue was a factor in the vote-of-no-confidence against Prime Minister Altankhuyag. Half of the Saikhanbileg cabinet is comprised of MPP members.

## **C. Functioning of Government: 9 / 12**

Corruption remains a serious problem in Mongolia and is viewed as pervasive. The Independent Authority Against Corruption (IAAC) actively investigates corruption allegations. In May 2014, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development released a report containing several recommendations for reducing corruption, including creating a new anticorruption strategy and strengthening and affirming the independence of the IAAC.

Although the government operates with limited transparency, some progress has been made in recent years. Citizens' Halls, forums established in 2009 to encourage civic participation in the legislative process, were given budgetary authority for the first time in 2013 through the disbursement of Local Development Funds. This measure is intended to foster local participation in politics as well as to increase accountability regarding the spending of funds. In July 2014, the parliament approved the Budget Transparency Law, which obliges state bodies and state-funded organizations to publicly disclose budgetary information.

## **Civil Liberties: 50 / 60**

### **D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 15 / 16**

While the government generally respects press freedom, many journalists and independent publications practice a degree of self-censorship to avoid legal action under libel laws that place the burden of proof on the defendant. Journalists have been charged in defamation suits by legislators and businesspeople; in many cases, the charges have been dropped.

There are hundreds of privately owned print and broadcast outlets, including several with online editions, and some international media operations have moved into the Mongolian market in recent years. However, the main source of news in the vast countryside is the state-owned Mongolian National Broadcaster. The government does not interfere with internet access.

Journalistic standards in Mongolia remain low, and media outlets tend to report rumors without confirmation. Political parties and their members have increasingly purchased media outlets, particularly television stations, in recent years. Although ownership of outlets is not routinely disclosed, most Mongolians are aware of the political positions of different media outlets. In August 2014, a blogger was

found guilty of defaming a government official for comments made on social media and sentenced to three months in prison. The sentence, which was criticized by the OSCE, marked the first time Mongolia's libel laws were extended to comments made on social media.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the constitution. The fall of communism led to an influx of Christian missionaries to Mongolia and a revival of the country's traditional Buddhism and shamanism. Enforcement of protections for religious freedom varies across the country, as it is largely dependent on the practices of local governments; some Christian groups have reported registration obstacles and harassment by local authorities. The Kazakh Muslim minority generally enjoys freedom of religion. Academic freedom is respected, and private discussion is free and open.

## **E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 11 / 12**

Freedoms of assembly and association are observed in law and in practice. Numerous environmental, human rights, and social welfare groups operate without government restriction. Trade unions are independent and active, and the government generally respects their rights. Collective bargaining is legal. However, labor rights are restricted for certain groups, such as foreign and temporary workers. Some employers unlawfully disrupted union activity in 2014.

## **F. Rule of Law: 12 / 16**

The judiciary is independent, but corruption among judges persists. The police force has been accused of making arbitrary arrests and traffic stops, holding detainees for long periods, and beating prisoners. In 2014, the government continued to make regulatory and legislative changes to combat abuse by police and security forces, and there were no reported cases of torture or inhuman treatment during the year. Prison deaths continue to be reported, as insufficient nutrition, heat, and medical care remain problems. A moratorium on the death penalty has been in effect since 2010.

Antidiscrimination laws do not address sexual orientation or gender identity, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people face societal bias, cases of assault, and mistreatment by police. In May 2014, the government announced plans to review current antidiscrimination legislation, considering a draft proposal to strengthen measures for equality. Civil society organizations, criticizing the broadness of the draft's language, urged the authorities to consider enacting specific measures against hate crimes and protections for the rights of LGBT people.

## **G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 12 / 16**

While the law protects the freedom of both internal movement and foreign travel, foreign citizens require exit visas to leave Mongolia, which can be denied on various grounds, including involvement in commercial disputes or civil complaints. In 2014, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) accepted a claim against Mongolia lodged by a U.S. businessman who, along with two colleagues, had been denied exit since 2012 because of allegations of tax evasion. The exit ban had remained in place despite multiple court rulings that the allegations are not supported by sufficient evidence.

The rights to own property and to establish private businesses are legally protected but sometimes

constrained by bureaucratic obstacles or weak enforcement of laws. In recent years, the government has simplified requirements and procedures for the establishment and operation of businesses.

The 2011 Law on Gender Equality was intended to increase the participation of women in the political, economic, and civic spheres. While women comprise 60 percent of all university students as well as 60 percent of all judges, they hold only 9 parliamentary seats despite a 20 percent quota on female candidates in the 2012 parliamentary elections. Spousal abuse is prohibited by law, but social and cultural norms continue to discourage victims from reporting such crimes, and the incidence—particularly in connection with alcohol abuse—remains high. In 2014, the government enacted a hotline to provide emergency assistance to victims of domestic abuse.

Mongolia is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children who are subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. The government has continued efforts to eliminate trafficking, though funding for such programs has been inadequate.

Although Mongolia's mineral-based mining boom has led to high economic growth since 2011, the country suffers from high levels of poverty, particularly in rural areas. Rural migrants to the capital have in recent years settled in the city's outskirts, where there is often poor access to sanitation, employment, and education. Moreover, underdeveloped fiscal policies and the mismanagement of resource revenues have limited the impact of the economic boom on human development.

### **Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)**

**X = Score Received**

**Y = Best Possible Score**

**Z = Change from Previous Year**

**[Full Methodology](#)**